

ENGROSSED HOUSE
BILL NO. 2978

By: Toure, Eddins, Ervin,
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and Smith (Bill)

(poor persons - Achieving Employment Not Welfare -
codification - effective date - emergency)

BE IT ENACTED BY THE PEOPLE OF THE STATE OF OKLAHOMA:

SECTION 1. NEW LAW A new section of law to be codified
in the Oklahoma Statutes as Section 230.19 of Title 56, unless there
is created a duplication in numbering, reads as follows:

A. The Oklahoma Legislature finds that:

1. The majority of welfare recipients desire to become
employed;

2. Often, barriers exist which keep welfare recipients from
becoming productive tax-paying members of society;

3. Many citizens support the concept of providing job
opportunities for welfare recipients to become economically self-
supporting through a program combining services and income support;

4. After services and income support are provided, able-bodied
welfare recipients are expected to work and stay employed;

5. Those welfare recipients who are capable of but prefer not
to become long-term employed and economically self-sufficient are
not entitled to welfare and should be removed from the Oklahoma
Welfare System;

6. As a result of the 1995 Oklahoma Welfare Self-Sufficiency Initiative and through the development and implementation of welfare reform, the Department of Human Services has made significant progress at reducing the number of welfare recipients in this state. However, program enhancements and changes are needed to achieve greater reductions in welfare dependency; and

7. The federal government will be giving states greater flexibility in designing their welfare programs.

B. The Oklahoma Legislature hereby establishes a welfare-to-work program, titled "Achieving Employment Not Welfare".

C. The components of the Achieving Employment Not Welfare Program are:

1. Employment preparation, which includes:

- a. education or training for specified time limits,
- b. private and public work experience,
- c. development of job search skills,
- d. job search, and
- e. employment;

2. Self-sufficiency, which includes increasing retained savings up to Five Thousand Dollars (\$5,000.00) for education expenses, reliable transportation, affordable and safe housing, and career development;

3. Reevaluating income resources, which includes calculating the income of any individual cohabitating with the recipient as a step-parent's income resource;

4. Strengthening case-closure policies and program violation enforcement which includes:

- a. that once a recipient is deemed employment ready or has been a welfare recipient for at least two (2) years, the recipient is required to engage in employment activities or any welfare assistance will

be terminated, except for recipients over sixty-five (65) years of age and the disabled,

- b. if at any time an adult recipient fails or refuses, without good cause, to comply with employment preparation or child support requirements, the case will be closed. If the person complies with all requirements, then the case would be reopened based on an agreement to participate after application of penalties;

5. Reaffirming fraud control measures, which include:

- a. continued implementation of the fraud control program irrespective of any change in federal rules,
- b. requiring criminal action be taken, and
- c. holding retailers or recipients found to be in violation of the fraud control program liable for state criminal penalties and disqualification from the program;

6. Persons guilty of welfare fraud shall be ineligible for future welfare assistance;

7. Statewide implementation of the electronic benefit card for receiving welfare assistance payments. Fingerprint or picture identification technology shall be incorporated to further control abuse; and

8. Expanding child care availability such as incentives for licensed child care facilities to remain open or provide evening or nighttime child care.

SECTION 2. NEW LAW A new section of law to be codified in the Oklahoma Statutes as Section 230.20 of Title 56, unless there is created a duplication in numbering, reads as follows:

A. Any person receiving welfare assistance from the Department of Human Services, except for those persons actively participating in a job training or education program, shall be required to attend

training or education programs specified by the Department to better prepare such person for employment.

B. The training or education programs specified by subsection A of this section may include, but not be limited to: Headstart teacher's aide preparation, parental training, financial management, including budgeting and purchases of clothing and food, setting up savings, time management, nutrition, job search training, communication skills, conflict resolution, stress management, personal hygiene, home sanitation, and car maintenance.

C. The Department shall provide for the education and training programs through video, personal attendance or other technology which assures the reviewing or attendance of such person. The Department shall contract with private or public agencies, vocational-technical schools, the Department of Education and other institutions of education to provide the education and training to persons receiving welfare assistance.

D. If the person fails or refuses to attend the required program, the case shall be closed until after applicable penalties have been applied and the person agrees to participate.

SECTION 3. This act shall become effective July 1, 1996.

SECTION 4. It being immediately necessary for the preservation of the public peace, health and safety, an emergency is hereby declared to exist, by reason whereof this act shall take effect and be in full force from and after its passage and approval.

Passed the House of Representatives the 5th day of March, 1996.

Speaker of the House of Representatives

Passed the Senate the ____ day of _____, 1996.

President

of the Senate